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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8896
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2393
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0900
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0843
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0792
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0245
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1261
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
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RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1314
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000727

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: RULING PARTY SWEEPS SENATORIAL ELECTIONS

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 705

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 664

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: As expected, ruling party Union Pour la Republique (UPR) won a majority of seats -- 13 out of 17 -- in the November 8 election for the renewal of the senate's third. Moderate Islamist party Tawassoul, which was fielding a common list with UPR, won one seat in Nouakchott. The opposition, represented by the Front National pour la Defense de la Democratie (FNDD) and the Rassemblement des Forces Democratiques (RFD) did not win a single seat with the RFD losing in Ahmed Ould Daddah's hometown of Boutilimit. The opposition and some independent candidates have accused the authorities of pressuring municipal advisors to vote for majority candidates. Allegations of vote buying and influence peddling abound. Even a majority party candidate complained he was pressured to step down in favor of UPR candidates. These elections augur difficult times to come for the opposition in a political system controlled by a single, potentially monolithic, majority party. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The outcome of the November 8 senatorial elections is far from surprising (Ref A). Ruling party UPR, already backed by a majority of senators (45 out of 56 before the senatorial election), won 13 out of 17 seats and is poised to win a 14th seat against an independent candidate in a November 15 second round election in Ould Yenge. With this first electoral win since its creation, UPR consolidates its position as the majority party despite recent stormy incidents pointing to divisions at its core (Ref B).

[1](#)3. (SBU) The opposition represented by the FNDD and RFD did not win a single seat and Ahmed Ould Daddah's RFD lost even in Daddah's hometown in Boutilimit. Note: Given the weight of tribal and regional politics, Mauritians are puzzled that Daddah lost his own hometown in both the presidential and senatorial elections. Many view this as a confirmation of fraud. End note. The opposition and independent candidates denounced strong pressures from the authorities to persuade municipal advisors to vote for majority party candidates and to convince independent candidates from stepping down. Note: Senatorial elections are indirect with votes being cast only by municipal council members. End note. In an interview on October 4 during the campaign, UFP president and FNDD figure Mohamed Ould Maouloud made scathing remarks about the electoral system, which he described as deficient, marked by intimidation, corruption and vote buying. Numerous articles appeared in the press denouncing

un-democratic practices such as "influence peddling, tribal and ethnic pressures."

14. (SBU) Elkory Ould Addad, PRDR candidate in Akjoujt, told media on November 1 he had been threatened to step down in favor of the UPR candidate. Surprisingly, PRDR is a party that supports the majority. Addad said he was threatened at his workplace with not being renewed at his current job and instructed not to undermine the "State party's" victory. He accused senior military officer Deputy Chief of Staff Colonel Mohamed Ould Mohamed Znagui of pressuring him.

14. (SBU) Two independent candidates won in Tintane (Hodh El Gharbi) and Bir Moughrein (Tiris Zemmour). There were many independent lists on this election. According to LES, independent lists show people disagree with their party's or tribe's choices and prefer to go solo. A majority party candidate from Union Pour la Democratie et le Progres (UDP), Foreign Minister Naha Mint Mouknass party, won in Kaedi.

15. (SBU) Comment: The results of the election are not surprising as Mauritians are traditionally on the side of power. The promise of future gains is a good enough incentive to support the majority. Also, senatorial elections have a reputation for being particularly corrupt and the majority has better access to resources. The opposition has been crushed once more in what foreshadows an unbalanced political system controlled by the majority. Mauritania could potentially return to a monolithic party system in the tradition of former President Ould Taya's PRDS party. Parliament's ordinary session opens on November 9

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with opposition icon Messaoud Ould Boulkheir at the presidency of the Assembly. It is possible that the majority will seek to replace Boulkheir in a move to further marginalize the opposition. Rumour has it that Aziz has been secretly negotiating with former prime minister Waghef to bring some opposition members into the fold to finish imploding the opposition. Thus far, no constructive dialogue between the government and the opposition has taken place. End comment.
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